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Moore spy trial begins

The espionage trial of Edwin G. Moore 2d began in federal court yesterday with prosecutors charging he tried to sell vital secrets to the Russians while the defendant's lawyer suggested that he could have been the victim of a Central Intelligence Agency plot to infiltrate the Soviet intelligence system.

In addition to two espionage counts, Mr. Moore, 56, is also charged with three counts of stealing classified CIA documents, many of which allegedly were recovered in a raid on his home.

Thomas L. Crowe, an assistant United States attorney, told the jurors that information allegedly offered by Mr. Moore to Soviet agents could have harmed national security.

"One of the highest attainments of counterintelligence is if you can get someone on the other side working for you," Mr. Crowe said in his hour-long opening statement to the nine-woman, three-man jury.

The prosecutor said that Mr. Moore, a former CIA agent, "very definitely bore a grudge against the CIA."

Mr. Crowe said that documents Mr. Moore allegedly offered the Russians in a manila envelope found about 8 feet inside the fence of the Soviet legation in Washington last December 21 could have provided the Russians details they lacked about U.S. intelligence operations. The materials ranged from a list of more than 5,700 CIA workers to parts of a paper on Soviet missiles.

The attempt failed, Mr. Crowe said, because two U.S. Federal Protective Service officers opened the envelope, realized the value of the snippets of documents they saw, and kept them from the eyes of the Russians who were curious about what had been found. In fact, he said, one of the officers handed a curious Russian a copy of a routine government "personal history" form that lists affiliations with groups such as the Communist party as "a sample" of the materials found, while the officer did not show documents stamped "classified."

FBI counterintelligence went into effect, Mr. Crowe said, to make contact with the still-unknown donor, who said the documents could be only the beginning of an effort to "penetrate" the CIA.

By the next afternoon, after a cash "drop" was made, Mr. Moore was arrested across from his Bethesda (Md.) home after having been placed under photographic surveillance based in the unfinished condominium apartment of Representative Thomas P.

Mr. Crowe also sketched the history of the CIA and its place in national defense and promised that expert witnesses, including George Bush, the former CIA director, would appear for the government in the next several weeks to testify about the significance of the type of data Mr. Moore allegedly tried to sell.

But Mr. Moore's lawyer, Courtland K. Townsend, Jr., sketched a more complicated picture of the evidence, and urged jurors to consider the trial's historic context, suggesting, "This case will bring all of us into a strange world I suspect most of us are not used to—the secret world of intelligence."

He cautioned that the language of espionage can be confusing and foster situations "where the implausible can become plausible," and belied Mr. Crowe's statement that Mr. Moore was frustrated at

never having risen high in his CIA career. Mr. Townsend said his client had begun work at the agency in 1952 and worked there until his retirement in 1973, but in two segments. In 1961, Mr. Townsend said, Mr. Moore was indicted by North Carolina authorities for arson after some of his own property in that state burned down, and his ties with the CIA were severed.

After an initial conviction, a mistrial, then acquittal on the charges, Mr. Moore was reinstated in 1967, Mr. Townsend said, only to be paid his six years' back pay with a New York bank check, not a government check.

The defense lawyer said documents would show that "the agency was somehow involved" and that a high official, who opposed reinstatement, wrote, "The North Carolina episode was very bizarre and the director was very concerned about this."

Related to the current espionage charges, Mr. Townsend said that last summer, while Mr. Moore was working on family property again in North Carolina, an undisclosed person contacted him, said he knew he was a former CIA employee and "asked him to do a project for the CIA that had to do with documents, espionage, intelligence, and the Soviet Union."

Mr. Townsend continued: "Shortly after the initial documents were turned over to him, more documents were turned over to him, and Mr. Moore was told to prepare a package, and deliver it with a note to the Soviet residence in Washington. This is the package Mr. Crowe described to you."

Mr. Townsend also said there is a chance Mr. Moore may plead insanity in the case, but he said that study of secret CIA files made available to him reveals that the agency was aware his client showed signs of psychiatric difficulties 20 years ago but that he was never to be informed.

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